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MUSLIM CONQUESTS IN NORTH AFRICA

BY THE

Rev. CANON SELL, D.D., M.R.A.S.

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The Rev. Canon Sell, D.D., M.R.A.S.

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BY

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THE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY FOR INDIA

MADRAS, ALLAHABAD, CALCUTTA AND COLOMBO

1914

PRINTED AT THE
S. P. C. K. PRESS, VEPERY, MADRAS
1914

PREFACE

THIS book contains a history of the affairs in Egypt and North Africa during the period of the rule of the Umayyad Khalífas at Damascus and that of the ʿAbbásid Khalífas at Baghdad.

For much little known and valuable information about the Berbers, I am indebted to Henri Fournel's *Les Berbers* (Paris, 1881). It is the most exhaustive and the most accurate book on the subject.

After this book had gone to the Press, I received numbers 18 and 19 of *The Encyclopædia of Islám*. The articles on Egypt and on the Fáṭimids should be read in connection with it.

MADRAS
April, 1914

EDWARD SELL

MUSLIM CONQUESTS

IN

NORTH AFRICA

THE Khalífa Abú Bakr soon saw that the best of all ways to settle the tribal disputes and the racial jealousies of his Arab subjects was to engage them in foreign wars, and he therefore welcomed conflict with Persia and the Byzantine empire. 'Umar, the next Khalífa, had no sooner settled the affairs in Syria than one of his best generals, 'Amr binu'l-'Ás, requested permission to lead an army into Egypt, pointing out that the country was wealthy and defenceless. 'Umar hesitated for a time, for he doubted the prudence of weakening his army then in Syria; but 'Amr met the objection by saying that he would undertake the work with a small force of 4,000 men. At last 'Umar reluctantly gave his consent, but only on the condition that, if recalled by letter before crossing the Egyptian frontier, 'Amr was to return at once. 'Amr then set out, but a messenger was soon sent after him bearing a letter of recall. 'Amr delayed the opening of it until he had crossed the frontier, and thus felt at liberty to disobey the order.

'Amr's remark to 'Umar that the country v defenceless was perfectly true, for owing to the ha rule of Cyrus, the Maqúqas, Archbishop of Alexand and Byzantine governor of Egypt, the whole provi was seething with discontent. The Copts, who w the real Egyptians, belonged to the Monophysite se which held the doctrine that there was but c nature in Christ; the rulers in Egypt, who came fr Constantinople, held the opposite view known as t Melkite one, so called from the connexion of leaders with the court party. The disputes betwe these two sects were very bitter. It has been w said that 'in the seventh century in Egypt the i terest in politics was quite secondary to the interes of religion. It was opinion on matters of faith a not on matters of government which formed t divided parties in the State. . . . Men debated wi fury upon shadows or shades of belief.' [1]

The Emperor Heraclius was very anxious to w over the Coptic people and to effect a union betwe the Monophysite and the Melkite sections of t Church. Two of the Patriarchs sent to Egy Nicetas and John the Almoner, were wise a tolerant rulers in Alexandria. Inspired by a laudab desire for unity, the emperor thought that might now go one step further; and so, at last, Hieropolis in A.D. 651, he issued his decree f the union of the Churches and appointed Athanasi

[1] Fournel, vol. i., p. 44.

rchbishop of Antioch, and Cyrus Archbishop of lexandria.

It is probable that in the history of the Church here has never been a more unsuitable appointment han that of Cyrus. The times were critical and alled for foresight and considerateness. Cyrus was nprudent and most intolerant. Both Copts and Melkites had watched with interest the emperor's ontest with Persia and had rejoiced with him in his ictories. When Jerusalem was conquered and gypt was freed from Persian rule, all gloried in hese triumphs. The time was propitious for an ttempt to soften the asperities of religious strife. Heraclius knew well the difficulties; he understood he importance men paid to phrases and formulas xpressing minute shades of beliefs; on the other and he could not free himself from the prevalent pinion of that age that the state had authority to ecree the nature of a doctrine and the form of its xpression, which must forthwith be accepted as the nal statement regarding it. But even assuming is as an accepted position, Heraclius made a fatal istake in his choice of the agent employed to carry ut the imperial wishes. 'He courted disaster in aking choice of Cyrus. For this was the evil enius who not only wrecked the emperor's hopes religious union in Egypt, but who after making mself a name of terror and loathing to the Copts r ten years, after stamping out to the best of his ower the Coptic belief by persecution, made Coptic

allegiance to Roman rule impossible; the tyrant w misgoverned the country into hatred of the empi and so prepared the way for the Arab conquest; a the traitor who at the critical moment delivered over by surrender to the enemy. This was the m of evil fame, known afterwards in Egyptian histo as al-Maqúqas, that mysterious ruler the rid of whose name and nation have hitherto confus and baffled historians, but whose identity with Cyr is now absolutely certain.'[1]

Cyrus was both the ecclesiastical and civil ruler Egypt. He failed to satisfy either party by t emperor's proposed formula of compromise. Loo ing back we may conclude that both parties we intractable, but it seems clear that Cyrus was ove bearing in a situation which required gentleness ar courtesy. Then again the Copts love their ancie Church intensely. As a nation they had not know independence; as a Church they had fought for and did not now wish to be again in bondage t Constantinople. Other suggestions were made t change the formula of compromise and these we embodied in an imperial edict. It is, howeve doubted whether the Copts ever received these propo sed modifications of the propositions expressing th dogmas in dispute. It is more probable that Cyru had resolved to attempt to drive the Copts int submission, and simply offered them union with th

[1] Butler, pp. 175-6.

Melkites or bitter persecution. They bravely chose he latter and for ten years the heavy hand of Cyrus vas upon them. It is a sad story. The result of it vas that though many, in outward form at least, ubmitted, the great mass of the Copts stood firm, nd suffered death or exile rather than yield up their ght to their own opinions. All this deepened their atred for the Byzantine emperor, for his representa- ve in Egypt and for the Church into which both ied to force them to enter.

Such then was the position when 'Amr and his my entered Egypt. 'Amr belonged to the Quraish ibe and became a convert some time after the ijra. The Prophet soon appointed him to a mili- ry command in which he displayed martial qualities. n Syria he increased his reputation as a bold warrior nd a skilful general. So it was with much alarm at Cyrus heard of his entrance into Egypt at the ead of a small but efficient army. He took some, ough very inadequate, measures of defence. elusium, a fortified city on the road-way between ria and Alexandria, was a most important stra- gic position, and 'Amr after a very short time cap- red it. The defence was very weak, but the story at the Copts aided the Arabs is without foundation. is not mentioned by any writer before the four- enth century,[1] and as the Arabs destroyed the urches it is extremely improbable that they owed

[1] See Butler, p. 212.

any debt of gratitude to the Copts. The loss of Pelusium was serious, for it opened a free way of communication for further troops from Syria. It shows either weakness or treachery on the part of Cyrus, for a few thousand men could have saved the place; but no help at all was sent. It has been thought that it was the first act of betrayal on the part of Cyrus, who may have had some hopes of establishing an independent patriarchate of Alexandria by alliance with the Arabs against the empire. On no other theory does it seem possible to explain his action.[1]

In due course 'Amr appeared before Babylon, a fortified city situated on the eastern side of the Nile, but meanwhile the Egyptian troops had gathered together. In several minor engagements 'Amr though successful lost men, and as his force was too small to stand the drain on its numbers, he sent an urgent request to the Khalífa 'Umar for reinforcements. Meanwhile leaving Babylon for the present he invaded the rich province of Fayúm, on the opposite bank of the Nile. His success there was not great but it occupied his troops until the expected reinforcements came, numbering in all 12,000 men.[2] By skilful strategy 'Amr was able to

[1] See Butler, p. 213.

[2] Syed Amír 'Alí gives a totally wrong impression when he says 'Amr 'with only 4,000 men in the course of three weeks cleared the country of the Byzantines' (*A Short History of the Saracens*, p. 41). The fact is that in three weeks he had advanced no farther than Pelusium, and could do little more until his army was raised to nearly 16,000.

win the battle of Heliopolis, July A. D. 640, and thus the way was clear for the siege of Babylon, which had a garrison well supplied with military stores and food. All the churches were in the charge of Melkite clergy and Cyrus, then in the fortress, would tolerate no other opinions. The few Copts who were there were refugees, or men who had under compulsion submitted to Cyrus. In no sense were they a party of any power or authority in Babylon, so that they had no influence one way or another in the subsequent events.

Cyrus now reaped the result of his intolerant rule. He had by crushing out opposition to his will brought about the appearance of unity, but had, at the same time, destroyed all sympathy between the rulers of whom he was the head and the real people of Egypt. He could not, even had he desired to do so, which is doubtful, have rallied the whole population to the defence. Knowing this, he summoned a council of the officers whom he trusted and the Melkite bishop of Babylon, when it was decided to enter into communication with 'Amr. Envoys were sent who delivered the following message: 'You and your army have invaded our country, and seem bent on fighting us. Your stay in the land is long, no doubt: but you are a small force, far outnumbered by the Byzantines, who are well-equipped and well armed. Now too you are surrounded by the waters of the Nile, and are in fact captives in our hand. It would be well for you, therefore, to send

envoys with any proposals you wish to make for an agreement, before the Byzantines overwhelm you. Then it will be too late and you will regret your error.'[1]

After two days 'Amr mentioned his terms: (1) Islám with brotherhood and equality, (2) payment of tribute and protection with an inferior status, (3) war till God gave the decision.[2]

When the garrison heard of these secret proceedings they refused to surrender. They made a sortie, but were repulsed. Then Cyrus found his opportunity and accepted the second term of 'Amr's proposal. This was embodied in a treaty which was then sent to the emperor for his approval. The emperor was displeased and recalled Cyrus to explain matters more fully. His explanation was weak and the emperor sent him into exile and rejected the treaty. Hostilities recommenced, and after a defence of seven months Babylon surrendered on Easter Monday A. D. 641.

It was now that some Copts, smarting under the cruel treatment of Cyrus and the Melkites, joined the Arabs. They had no leader, they were isolated here and there, and so dismayed and perplexed that many forsook their faith; but the bulk of the Copts remained firm.

'Amr now determined to march on Alexandria. There were several engagements during the march.

[1] Butler p. 255. [2] Ibid. p. 256.

In one 'Amr's son 'Abdu'lláh was badly wounded. He begged his comrades to retire a little way that he might get air. 'Air,' said a leader, 'you want air in front and not behind,' and pressed forward with his men. The garrison of Alexandria was large and the entrance from the sea was open, allowing the free entrance of reinforcements and of provisions. The Arabs had no siege equipments, so the prospects of a successful defence were good. Meanwhile, Heraclius had died. He had tried hard to unite the various parts of his empire, but his ecclesiastical policy was fatal to a complete union. Political changes at Constantinople led to the recall of Cyrus from exile, and his re-appointment to Egypt, with full powers, given by a weak emperor, to conclude a treaty with the Arabs. On arrival he recommenced his ill-usage of the Copts. Cyrus then went to Babylon to arrange terms of peace, which was finally concluded on the understanding that tribute should be paid, that the Arab troops should remain where they were, that the garrison of Alexandria should depart by sea, that churches should not be injured, and that Jews and Christian should be left in peace. This treaty was signed in November A.D. 641. The Khalífa 'Umar was soon informed of it and a thanksgiving service was held. In Alexandria news of the secret treaty soon leaked out, but Cyrus contrived to win over the chief men and so gained their consent.

The Arabs then came to demand the tribute, upon which the people, more patriotic than their chief,

were furious and threatened to take the life of Cyrus. Again with great skill he defended his conduct, the tumult was subdued and the tribute was paid. It is difficult to explain the submission of the people to the strong will of Cyrus, except on the supposition that they were wearied and worn out under his intolerant rule, and saw no other prospect of peace and rest except under this treaty. Alexandria was a strong position, the coast towns were still open, the mass of the people did not desire the Arab domination. The only apparent reason for a disgraceful surrender seems to have been the treachery of Cyrus, whose character is well summed up by a modern historian. 'But what is to be said of this amazing treaty of surrender? Of the dark and subtle part played by al-Maqúqas or Cyrus, the Patriarch, of his strange intimacy with the leader of the Arabs, and of his strange anxiety all through the war to hasten the submission of Egypt, it is difficult to speak in measured language. The guilt of deliberate treason to the Roman Empire must remain an indelible stain on his memory, stained already by the folly and the brutality of the ten years' persecution.'[1]

'Amr now built near Babylon the city of Fusṭáṭ,[2] which for three centuries remained the capital. Under the treaty, the Byzantines could leave Alexandria; the native Copts, could not. Cyrus, now

[1] Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, p. 334.

[2] The name probably comes from φοσσᾶτον, fossatum, camp, see Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, p. 340.

in need of friends and so perhaps desirous of finding some amongst the Copts, applied to 'Amr for permission for them to depart from Alexandria. There were military reasons against it and the request was refused. Cyrus was now a saddened man. He was disturbed by the political changes in Constantinople, his ambitious hopes were shattered and his life was in danger. Broken in mind and body, as his end drew near his conscience awoke, and he is said to have 'deplored his betrayal of Egyyt with ceaseless tears'. This great traitor to his Church and country passed away on March 20, 642.

At the end of the armistice, September 29, 642, 'Amr's troops entered Alexandria and the Byzantine rule ended in Egypt.[1] With the death of Cyrus the hopes of the Copts revived. 'Amr recognized their position and approved their desire to have at their head their old Patriarch, Benjamin, now in hiding. The following proclamation was then issued: 'In whatsoever place Benjamin, the Patriarch of the Egyptian Christians, is living, to that place we grant protection and security, and peace from God. Wherefore let the Patriarch come hither in security and tranquility, to administer the affairs of his Church and to govern his nation.'

[1] See Butler, Chapters xxiv, xxv for a brilliant account of Alexandria at this time. In the latter chapter, the question of the burning of the Library is discussed. The current story that the Khalífa 'Umar ordred it be destroyed may be dismissed as without any historical foundation.

At last he was found and his return caused great joy. He was a good man, much respected by his people, to whose pastoral care he now devoted his life. He died in A.D. 662.[1]

The Khalífa 'Umar thought that an increased tribute should be sent to him, but 'Amr, in many ways a kindly man, did not approve of a further burden on the people. So he was removed from his governorship and 'Abdu'lláh bin Sa'd was appointed in his stead. 'Amr was asked to retain command of the army, but he declined, saying, 'I should be like a man holding a cow by the horns, whilst another milked her.' So he left Egypt. The increased taxation bore heavily upon the people, and they applied to Constantinople for help. In response to this appeal a fleet was sent with a force sufficient when disembarked to recover the city of Alexandria. This alarmed the Khalífa and 'Amr was at once sent back with an army of 15,000 men. The city was retaken in the summer of A.D. 646. The Patriarch Benjamin asked that he might be buried in the Church of St. John, and for special treatment for the Copts. The first request was soon granted, but the second was more difficult, for it was not easy to differentiate between the Melkites and the Copts. The Copts, however, had taken no part in the rising, but they seem to have rendered aid to

[1] See Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, pp. 172–3; 473 for a good account of this excellent man.

the Arabs in their recent march. This has been misrepresented as an alliance between the Copts and the Arabs on the first entry of the latter into Egypt, which was not at all the case.[1] 'Amr did not listen to the second request of Benjamin, and treated the Copts now with severity, which had they been allies he would not have done, and later on he did the same. 'The Arab generals at this stage made no distinction between Copts and Romans: they clearly thought that both parties alike were in armed rebellion. This proves that they had no ground of presumption that the Copts were friendly or even neutral: yet they would have had very strong ground, if it had been true that the Copts on the original invasion hailed the Arabs as deliverers.'[2] With the second capture of Alexandria the conquest of Egypt was complete 'Amr then moved westward, established his rule in Barka, and advanced as far as Tripoli. He was the first to send a tribute of Berber slaves, thus originating 'in that unhappy land the traffic in human flesh and blood'.[3] 'Amr was then made Governor of Egypt for some years, and was rewarded by a gift of its entire revenue. He died at the age of ninety in A.D. 663.

The war in Afrikia had now to be carried on by other men. There were two opposing forces: the Byzantine population with their garrison, and the

[1] See Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, p. 480.
[2] Ibid, p. 472.
[3] Muir, *The Caliphate: its Rise, Decline and Fall*, p. 174.

native Berbers, a warlike race by far the more formidable of the two. They had in their mountain fastnesses maintained their independence against many rulers in the plains. 'Carthage fell; the wars against Jugurtha were fought out to their bloody conclusion; the Vandals drove out the Romans; the Romans drove out the Vandals; Northern Africa from one end to the other became a theatre of religious persecution, wasted with fire and sword; but through all these tempests and vicissitudes the mountaineers preserved untained their barbarism and independence.'[1] They were divided into many tribes, accustomed to constant tribal feuds, hardy and ready for war at any time, at any place, and with any power which tried to bring them into subjection. The Arabs in due time, as we shall see, found in them a foe far more formidable than the mercenary troops and oppressed subjects of Persia and the Byzantine Empire. They were subdued only after a long and tedious struggle and great loss of life, but were never completely conquered. 'The conquest of Africa is impossible', wrote a Governer to the Khalífa Ábdu'l-Malik, 'scarcely has a Berber tribe been exterminated, when another takes its place'.[2]

However, the Khalífa Mu'áwiyya, now firmly seated on the throne, determined to go forward. The northern part of Africa was divided into Afrikia,

[1] Osborn, *Islám under the Arabs*, p. 480.
[2] Dozy, *Spanish Islám* p. 125.

extending from Egypt to what is now Algeria; Maghribu'l-adná, the lower or middle part; Maghribu'l-aqṣá, which included the Morocco of the present day. We may pass by the first expedition in Afrikia in the time of the Khalífa 'Umar and the second sent by the Khalífa Mu'áwiyya, under the command of Mu'áwiyya ibn Hudaij, for these led only to a temporary occupation. Then in A.D. 669, Mu'áwiyya sent a much larger expedition, comprising 10,000 men, under the command of 'Uqaba, a capable general, who soon established himself in the province. Addressing his soldiers one day he said: 'When the Imám is in Afrikia the people seek shelter from danger by professing Islám; when he retires they fall back into infidelity. I desire, therefore, to found a city which will serve as a camp and a defence to Islám for all time.' Accordingly in A.D. 670 he built the fortified city of Qayrawán, a city famous for its many sieges and the part it played in the wars of succeeding years. The Arab historians describe the site selected as a 'forest infested by wild beasts and reptiles'; but as materials were found in other buildings in the neighbourhood which were partly used in the construction of the new city, and as near it are the ruins of a Roman station, this statement seems to be incorrect.[1] The story evidently arose from a desire to magnify the power of 'Uqaba, at the sound of whose voice the reptiles are

[1] See Fournel, pp. 156–7.

said to have disappeared. Soon after this, 'Uqaba for some unexplained reason was then recalled, and Maslama ibn Mukhallad took his place. His recall was a grief to 'Uqaba who at length gained the consent of the Khalífa Yazíd to return to Afrikia in A.D. 682. He at once destroyed the new city, repaired the fortifications of Qayrawán and brought back the people into it. He then marched westward, attacked Baghdiah, a fortified post held by Berbers and Byzantines, whom he drove into their citadel and then passed rapidly on. At Ceuta Count Julian met him courteously, and was confirmed in his appointment as governor of the city. 'Uqaba then defeated several Berber forces and, at last, after much fighting, arrived on the shore of the Atlantic in the year A.D. 683. He rode his horse into the waters and exclaimed; 'O Lord, but for this sea, I would have gone into still farther regions to spread the glory of thy name and to smite thy enemies.'

'Uqaba was displeased with the Berber chief Kusaila, who to save his life had become, at least nominally, a Muslim; and he determined to humiliate him. So one day he ordered him to flay a sheep with his own hands. He made him obey the order, but Kusaila vowed vengeance on the man who had thus insulted him, and commenced a correspondence with the Byzantines and the Berbers. This grave indiscretion on the part of 'Uqaba took place during one of the halts made by the army on its return march to Qayrawán with the trophies of its victories.

The people were struck with terror at the sight of the victorious army and offered no resistance to it on its way. 'Uqaba then divided his force in order to make a reconnaissance in one direction. Kusaila seized the opportunity thus afforded and made his escape. He found the Berbers already prepared by his correspondence, and now that a leader had appeared ready to resist the march of the Arabs they rallied round him. 'Uqaba's force was small in comparison with that of the Berbers, but he could not avoid the conflict. After saying a prayer, he broke the scabbard of his sword, the Arab way of expressing that only victory or death was to be looked for, and then, with all the fury of fanaticism, he and his troops fell upon the enemy. If they could gain nothing else, they could at least win the crown of martyrs. So 'Uqaba met his death as a hero should, and in the fatal field of Tahuda the illustrious warrior, who had carried the armies of Islám from the deserts of Nubia to the waves of the Atlantic, passed away.

When the news of the disaster reached Qayrawán, Zubair ibn Qays called on the Muslims to arm and avenge the fall of 'Uqaba; but the men were wearied and disheartened. In vain did he urge them to rally round him, for an old warrior said: 'No, by God, we will not listen to thee, thou hast no authority over us; it is better to return to the East, whosoever will let him follow me.' Then they all marched back to Egypt and Kusaila entered

into Qayrawán at the head of his gallant Berbers. The decadence of the Byzantines is seen from the fact that Afrikia was freed from the Arabs by Berbers and not by them. It was not a Byzantine prefect, but a Berber chief who for five years ruled over the Berbers and the Byzantine settlers, and carried on the administration of Qayrawán and the surrounding country. The Berbers were now masters of Afrikia.

'Abdu'l-Malik was now Khalífa, but the position of the empire was critical.[1] 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair was the rival Khalífa in the Ḥijáz; and now the set back in Afrikia took place. The Khalífa was advised that when his power had been re-established, it was the desire of his nobles that an expedition should start for Afrikia to release the Muslims now in the power of Kusaila. It was resolved to send an army, under the command of Zubair ibn Qays to avenge the death of 'Uqaba and the defeat of Tahuda.

[1] For an account of the difficulties he had to contend with, see *The Umayyads and the 'Abbásids Khalifates* (C.L.S.) pp. 19-21. Malik was able to subdue his enemies by the aid of his skilful but barbarous general al-Ḥajjáj. This tyrant, however, sometimes showed a forgiving spirit, as the following story shows. One day he asked a wild Arab what sort of man this Ḥajjáj was, whom every one talked about. The Arab said that he was a very wicked man 'Then', said Ḥajjáj, 'do you not know me?' The Arab replied, 'No.' 'Then', said Ḥajjáj, 'it is Ḥajjáj who is talking to you.' The Arab concealed his fear and calmly said, 'Do you know me?' 'No' was the answer. The Arab said, 'I am of the family of Zubair, whose posterity all become fools three days in the year, and this I suppose is one of them.' Ḥajjáj laughed and passed on and the Arab was saved by his ready wit.

The fourth expedition (A.D. 688-9) under the command of *Z*ubair then entered Afrikia, and in due course marched towards Qayrawán. Kusaila mistrusting the Arabs in the city, thought it would be preferable to meet the enemy in the open field, so after selecting a suitable place near a village called Mons, he awaited the attack. *Z*ubair again gave his men three days rest and then led them on against the Berbers. The battle that followed was fought with desperation. The one side thirsted for revenge, the other fought with all the fiery patriotism of the Berbers for the independence of their country. Kusaila at last fell mortally wounded, and the Berbers, disheartened at the death of their noble leader, gave way.

*Z*ubair then entered Qayrawán and once more restored Arab rule. He set the administration in order, and conquered Tunis with a view to punishing the Byzantines for aiding the Berbers. But *Z*ubair soon lost heart; the responsibilities of government weighed heavily on him, and he determined to return once more to Egypt. He said: 'I fear that Afrikia draws me towards the affairs of the world.' The historians say[1] that he was filled with the spirit of devotion, that he desired to pass the rest of his days in the contemplation of God, that he feared his spiritual life would suffer by a continued stay in Afrikia.

When the Byzantines heard that he was returning

[1] Fournel, *Les Berbers*, vol. i, p. 196.

to Barka, they equipped a fleet and landed troops, and before his arrival devastated the country. This placed Zubair at a great disadvantage, and, in a battle which followed, he and his chief men were slain. The few who escaped took the sad news to Damascus.

The Khalífa 'Abdu'l-Malik was profoundly grieved. He had lost in these African wars the brave and valiant 'Uqaba, and now Zubair had also perished. In spite of all the treasure spent and the blood shed, no permanent occupation has as yet been possible beyond the Egyptian boundaries. But the Khalífa had troubles nearer home, and for a time Afrikia had to be left alone. 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair was a rival Khalífa in the Ḥijáz; and the turbulent Khárijites[1] scoured 'Iráq leaving desolation behind them. These and other enemies occupied the Khalífa's time and demanded all his attention. When at last he had secured peace at home, he gave orders for another expedition, to Afrikia.

The fifth expedition (A.D. 693) set out under the command of Ḥasan ibn Nu'mán. He entered Egypt at the head of 40,000 men, and there awaited further orders. These came in due course and with them this message from the Khalífa; 'I place the treasures of Egypt at your disposal; spare no pains to satisfy all who accompany you and may the blessing of God be on you.'

Meanwhile in Qayrawán the Arabs were passive spectators of all that was going on; the Byzantines

[1] See *The Umayyad and the 'Abbásid Khalifates* (C.L.S.), p. 9.

were seeking to regain their lost powers; the Berber chiefs were jealous of each other. This was the condition of the various parties, when the most powerful army yet sent forth entered Afrikia.

Ḥasan learnt that the commandant at Carthage was considered the most powerful Byzantine official, and so he decided to take possession of Carthage. He took it by storm and destroyed the principal buildings. Many of the inhabitants found safety in their ships and sailed away to Sicily and to Spain. As the Berbers and the Byzantines still in the field now joined their forces, Ḥasan's work was by no means over; but he skilfully attacked them in detail and the Berbers took refuge in their mountain fastnesses. Ḥasan then retired to Qayrawán to give his troops a well-earned rest. When the news of the fall of Carthage reached Constantinople in the autumn of A.H. 78. (A.D. 697), a relief force was sent which recaptured Carthage, soon, however, to be lost again. The power of the Byzantines in Afrikia was now broken; but the Arabs had still to overcome the warlike Berbers.

The successor of Kusaila was al-Káhina,[1] or 'the divineress', a Berber queen who gained a great influence over the Berbers. Ḥasan then set forth with the determination to destroy her power and to make himself the sole master of Maghrib. Al-Káhina accepted the challenge, descended from

[1] For the meaning of Káhin, see *The Life of Muḥammad* (C.L.S.), pp. 37-8.

the mountains, and defeated Ḥasan in the battle of the Wádi'u'l-Adhra, the river of the virgin. The Arabs then again retired eastward to Barka, leaving eighty of their nobles in the hands of the enemy. Al-Káhina released them all with the sole exception of Khálid bin Yazíd, whom she praised as the most beautiful and bravest man she had ever seen, and adopted him so that he might be the brother of her own two sons.[1] Generous as she was to her prisoners, she still possessed the limitations of the savage, and when she had come to the conclusion that the Arabs wanted the country in order to enjoy its luxuriance and wealth, she could see no other way of frustrating that desire than by rendering the country barren and desolate. She said to the Berbers: 'These strangers only desire our country for the cities, the gold and the silver, the pasture lands, and the fields; if we destroy these, they come no more.'[2] 'Immediately the hordes of the Berbers spread all over the country, more destructive than an army of locusts. The cities and the villages were laid in ruins; the groves were cut down; the precious metals, and all that was valuable and could not be destroyed, were carried away into the recesses of the mountains. From Tripoli to Tangier there was not a town or a village which did not suffer in a greater or less degree from the effects of this destroying fury. These stern

[1] See Fournel, vol. i, p. 220.
[2] Ibid, p. 221.

measures materially aided the re-conquest of the province. As Ḥasan ibn Nu'mán advanced into the country he was hailed as a deliverer by all the mercantile and agricultural populations. The gates of the cities were flung open to him; the people thronged into his camp to take the oath of allegiance, and swell the strength of his army. The Sibyl was defeated and slain in a great battle; and the Berbers, exhausted by the indomitable perseverance of the Arabs, sued for peace. They obtained it on the condition that they should furnish a contingent of 24,000 men to aid in the invasion of Spain.'[1] Thus the inspiration of al-Káhina was a fatal one. For five years Ḥasan in Barka had bided his time, and in the year A.D. 703 he received reinforcements, money, and the order to return to Afrikia. Al-Káhina's sons and Khálid, her adopted son, begged her to take flight. She refused saying, 'It would be a disgrace to my people; she who has commanded Berbers, Christians and Arabs should know how to die as a queen.'[2] A terrible battle ensued in which the Berbers were beaten and al-Káhina was slain. Hasan again re-entered Qayrawán, the city of many conflicts, and Afrikia was once more in the possession of the Arabs. The Berbers then begged for peace, which was granted to them on the condition that they furnished 12,000 troops. Ḥasan formed these men into two bands, placing each under the

[1] Osborn, *Islám under the Arabs*, p. 194.
[2] Fournel, vol. i, p. 223.

command of the two sons of al-Káhina. He then reorganized the administration once more.

Ḥasan was, however, suddenly recalled and Músá ibn Nusair was appointed governor in his stead. The father of Músá had been the highly esteemed commandant of the Khalífa Mu'áwiyya's bodyguard, and Músá himself was a man of mark. The conquest of Maghrib now began again and Músá by his activity soon pacified the country, and by his sagacity won over the Berbers to a profession of Islám. His viceroyalty extended from Egypt to the Atlantic, with the exception of Ceuta which was still held by Count Julian for Roderick, the Gothic king of Spain. Roderick had murdered the previous king Witiza and had also insulted the daughter of Count Julian. 'The maiden was very beautiful and the king forgetful of his honour, which bound him to protect her as he would his own daughter, put her to shame. The dishonour was the greater, since Julian's wife was a daughter of Witiza, and the royal blood of the Goths had thus been insulted in the person of Florinda.'[1] The girl was in great distress and begged her father, as he valued his knightly honour, to avenge her. Julian responded to his daughter's call and made proposals to Músá for an invasion of Spain. The Khalífa Walíd was not very favourable to so hazardous an expedition. He said: 'Explore Spain with some light troops, but do not, at any rate for the present, expose the large army to the

[1] S. Lane-Poole, *Moors in Spain*, p. 11.

dangers of an expedition beyond the seas.[1] However, he finally consented to the despatch of a reconnoitring force, mainly composed of Berber troops.

In the year A.D. 710, Músá sent one of his chents,[2] named Taríf, with a troop of one hundred horse and a body of four hundred foot soldiers on the expedition. Taríf with his men crossed the straits in vessels provided by Count Julian. A few prisoners were made in the neighbourhood of Algeciras, after which the expedition returned to Africa.

This raid stirred up the desire of the Muslims for a more permanent settlement, and far larger gains. Músá, an ambitious soldier, was ready and willing to yield to the common wish, and so he placed under the command of another chent, Táriq ibn Ziyád, Commander of his bodyguard, seven thousand Berber troops. With this large force Ṭáriq in A.D. 711, landed near a mountain, which they then named Jabal-Ṭáriq (Gibraltar), the Hill of Ṭáriq. King Roderick on hearing the news of this invasion at once hurried south with an imposing army, said to have included one hundred thousand men. Ṭáriq's position now was critical and it was not much relieved by the arrival of five thousand more Berbers, for that only made his army twelve thousand strong. Roderick had compelled the sons of the murdered King Witiza

[1] Dozy, *Spanish Islám*, p. 230.

[2] For an explanation of this term, see The *Umayyad and the 'Abbásid Khalifates* (C.L.S.) p. 45.

to serve in his army, and they at a critical time fled after the first onslaught. Many were discontented with all that Roderick had done and were only half-hearted in his cause. It is not likely that the disaffected nobles had any idea of handing over their country to the Muslims. They may have looked upon the invasion as a raid for booty, after the collection of which the invaders would retire. This, indeed, was the order given by Músá to Ṭáriq. No great harm would be done; but the prestige of King Roderick would suffer and their chances of sovereignty would increase. This was quite a natural view to take, but it was a selfish and a short-sighted one, and it lead to the loss of their country. These considerations weakened the king's position. Still allowing for these defects, the victory was a great one. The battle (July 9, A.D. 711) was very severe; but the Muslims won at last and Roderick himself was slain or, at all events, was seen no more and the country was left without a king. Ṭáriq saw how great an opportunity lay before him, disobeyed the order to return, and pushed on further into the interior. The Muslims then remained in the country and, aided by the Jews, gradually increased their hold on it. Practically in Spain the Gothic Empire, on the day of the battle of the Wádi Bekka, was ruined, and the rule of the Muslims commenced. Músá, on hearing of the success of Ṭáriq, crossed over to Spain with a large army in A.D. 712 and soon won many victories. He seems to have been jealous of Ṭáriq's success, for on

meeting him he said: 'Why hast thou advanced without my permission? I ordered thee only to make a foray and immediately to return to Africa.'[1] Músá incurred the displeasure of the Khalífa Walíd, for he had heard of his ill-treatment of Ṭáriq, and was probably jealous of his growing power. So he was recalled in the year A.D. 714. We must, however, now leave the story of Spain and return to Africa.

Músá before his departure for Damascus placed his three sons in high appointments. 'Abdu'l-'Azíz became viceroy of Spain; 'Abdu'lláh was made the chief ruler in Afrikia; a third son had charge of Maghribu'l-Aqṣá. He then started on his journey with a large retinue and much treasure, but the Khalífa was dead before he arrived at Damascus.

Músá by the military glory he had gained, by the riches he had amassed, by the authority he exercised in placing his sons in positions of influence and power, showed, or seemed to show, that he aimed at a regal state in the far west, which would overshadow the Khalífate in the east. This at least is a reasonable explanation of the displeasure which the new Khalífa, Sulaiman, showed when he dispossessed Músá of his personal riches, removed 'Abdu'lláh from the governorship of Afrikia and took away the possessions of the whole family. 'Abdu'l-'Azíz,

[1] Dozy, *Spanish Islám*, p. 233; aṭ-Ṭubari also says he was angry with Ṭáriq (غضب على طارق) *Tárikhu'l-Rusúl wa'l-Mulúl*, Series II, vol ii., p. 1253.

viceroy of Spain, was assassinated in the year A.D. 715. It is supposed that this was done under orders from Damascus and the heartless Sulaiman sent the head of the son to the father.[1] Músá died some time after in a state of penury. The same fate awaited Ṭáriq. Thus did these two men meet with nothing but ingratitude for the great services they had rendered.

Yazíd ibn Abú Muslim, the new governor of Afrikia, thought that he could rule as despotically there as he had done in 'Iráq; but the Berbers were of a class quite different to the men of Arabia and were by no means inclined to be so treated. Yazíd ignored their proud spirit and, forming a bodyguard of young Berbers, he gave orders that the name of the individual should be tattooed on the right and the name of the corp on the left hand of each man. This order they stoutly resisted, saying, 'He wishes to treat us as Christians',[2] and forthwith assassinated him. Ibn Khaldún says that these Berbers belonged to the sect of the Khárijites. The advent of this turbulent body in Afrikia was the cause of much trouble. This fanatical sect arose in the time of the Khálifa 'Alí in this way. At the battle of Ṣiffin,[3] they at first agreed to the settlement by arbitration of the dispute between 'Alí and Mu'áwiyya about

[1] See Muir, *The Caliphate: its rise, decline and fall.* p. 368.

[2] Quoted by Fournel in *Les Berbers*, vol. i., p. 272.

[3] For an account of this battle, and the part the Khárijites played, see *The Four Rightly-Guided Khalifas* (C.L.S.), pp. 57–60.

the succession to the Khalífate. Then after it was made they stoutly protested, saying that God alone could arbitrate. When told that they had wished for it, they said that they had repented and fully recognized that they were then in error. Twelve thousand men left the army of 'Alí and so gained the name of Khárijites (Khawárij) or seceders. They taught as important dogmas the right of the people to elect as Khalífa the best and the purest Muslim they could find, and that neither a member of the great Quraish clan, nor a descendant of the family of the Prophet had any special claim to the Khalífate. Thus they rejected the Umayyad Khalífas as usurpers, and denied the divine right of the House of 'Alí. Men who were shocked at the dissolute lives of the Umayyad Khalífas, and saw danger to the unity of Islám by the ambition of individuals, joined the ranks of the Khárijites. Like all fanatics they displayed the greatest courage on the battle field, and were always ready for a fight. They were in constant rebellion. 'Every man,' they said, 'is eligible for the Khalífate, whatever his standing—whether he belongs to the highest nobility or to the lowest ranks of society—be he Quraishite or slave: a dangerous doctrine which cut at the root of the institution. . . . The government and the aristrocracy of 'Iráq determined to crush them and a ruthless persecution followed.'[1] In order to gain

[1] Dozy, *Spanish Islám*, p. 80.

security of life and property large numbers of them fled to Afrikia.

The Berbers were delighted with them. Here were men who claimed to be true Muslims, who hated the governors and the viceroys of the Khalífa as much as they did. The Khárijites believed it was their duty to exterminate idolaters, hypocrites and misbelieving Muslims, and such latter were the ruling party in Afrikia. The Berbers also hated their Arab rulers, and now to their joy found that in so doing they were good Muslims after all. 'Simple and ignorant, they doubtless understood nothing of the speculations and dogmatic subtleties which were the delight of more cultivated minds. At any rate they understood enough of the Khárijite doctrine to assimilate their revolutionary and democratic principles, to share the fanciful hopes of universal levelling which their teachers aroused, and to be convinced that their oppressors were reprobates whose destiny was hell-fire.'[1] They accepted Khárijite views with delight, and placed large armies under Khárijite leaders. Henceforward this notorious sect played as great a part in Afrikia as it had done in Asia.

The Berbers who had killed Yazíd did not repudiate the authority of the Khalífa, but provisionally accepted Muḥammad ibn Ansu'l-Ansarí as governor and reported to the Khalífa what they had

[1] Dozy, *Spanish Islâm*, p. 131.

done. He wisely accepted their excuses. The Khalífa Hishám, much annoyed at the constant outbreaks and disturbances in Afrikia, said: 'By Alláh, I will show them what the wrath of an Arab of the old stamp is! I will send upon them an army such as they have never seen, its van shall be upon them before the rear-guard has left Damascus.'[1] In order to punish the Berbers and restore peace, he sent Kulthúm ibn Ayádh with an army of 30,000 men, which with the garrisons already in the country brought up the whole Arab force to 70,000 soldiers. The circumstances were so grave and the position so critical that the Khalífa made arrangements for the conduct of affairs in the event of the death of Kulthúm. Should that occur Balj ibn Bishr was to be the commander of the forces, and should he fall Thalaba ibn Salama was to succeed him. With a powerful army under his command Kulthúm marched on full of hope and confidence; but on the march the soldiers behaved so badly that they aroused much ill-feeling in the country, which became a source of weakness to them. Meanwhile, the Berbers under Khálid ibn Ḥamíd gathered together in great strength. Kulthúm advanced so far into the country that it was on the banks of the river Sabou in Maghribu'l-Aqṣá that the two armies met in the year A.D. 740. The Berbers made their preparations with great care, and the men were full of enthusiasm. On the other hand, Kulthúm

[1] Dozy, *Spanish Islám*, p. 133.

influenced by his nephew, Balj, refused to accept any advice from the men who had acted as guides, who understood the Berber method of warfare, and who suggested that he should intrench and avoid an engagement. This proved to be a fatal mistake on his part. Balj commenced the attack with a cavalry charge. He thought that what appeared to him to be a disorganized rabble could never withstand the shock; but the Berbers had expected and were prepared for it. They had filled bags with flint stones, which they hurled at the heads of the horses. Rendered wild and unmanageable by this curious defence the horses soon threw their riders to the ground, and rushing back on the Arab infantry cast them into confusion. Then the Berbers sent into the Arab line a number of unbroken mares, to whose tails they fastened large pieces of leather. These maddened horses threw Kulthúm's troops into disorder. The Berbers at once attacked the Arabs all along the line, and killed many of their leaders, including Kulthúm. The victory of the Berbers and their Khárijite allies was complete. They blocked the way to Qayrawán, and so the Arabs who escaped took refuge in Ceuta, from which place they could not escape. The Berbers unable to take Ceuta by a direct assault, determined to reduce it by famine. The Arabs, in danger of starvation, applied to the governor of Spain to send vessels to take them away. But the Muslims in Spain had no love for these Syrian Arabs and he refused help. Then the danger of a

rising of Berber Muslims in Spain made him relent, and so, at last, he sent transports to convey the besieged warriors in Ceuta to a place of safety.

When the Khalífa Hishàm heard of the defeat of his grand army, and of the death of Kulthúm and of many officers, he did not hesitate for a moment; but at once sent orders to Hanzala, the governor of Egypt, to proceed forthwith to Afrikia. Meanwhile, the insurrection spread with great rapidity in all parts, and the Berbers felt that the hour of their deliverance from Arab domination had indeed come.

No sooner had Hanzala arrived at Qayrawán than he heard that Abdu'l-Wáhid and 'Ukasha bin Ayyúb at the head of a large army were advancing to attack him. These commanders unwisely divided their forces into two bodies, each taking a separate route.

Hanzala heard of this and was able by rapid movements to attack them in detail. The first detachment was utterly destroyed and 'Ukasha was taken prisoner. An army of 40,000 Arabs attacked the second detachment and the battle was long and severe. The Berbers were fighting for freedom; the Arabs to avenge many defeats, so they broke and cast away the scabbards of their swords as a sign that they would conquer or die. In the midst of the fight nothing could be heard but the clash of arms. The left wing of the Berbers was driven back by the fury and force of the onset; this was a signal to the left wing of the Arabs to advance and attack the

right wing of the Berbers. This movement was successful and a complete victory was won.

The head of 'Abdu'l-Wáhid was brought to Hanzala who then gave thanks to God for this great victory. The other general, 'Ukasha, now a prisoner, was put to death. Hanzala returned to Qayrawán and reported the victory to the Khalífa, who expressed his great satisfaction at the good news; but the success was not permanent and many troubles were in store for future Khalífas.

When the 'Abbásids came into power, many Umayyads in order to escape from the persecution which awaited them fled to Afrikia. This led to many conflicts between the Arabs already there and the new comers in which the Berbers ever ready to oppose their resident masters took the side of the Umayyad emigrants. According to Ibn Khaldún,[1] the Berbers once again in possession of Qayrawán, cruelly tortured the resident Arabs and desecrated their mosque. When the Khalífa Manṣúr heard how the Berbers were regaining their power, he sent in the year A.D. 761 another army of 40,000 men to overawe them. Then happened what had so often taken place before—dissension between the tribal Berber chiefs. The Arab commander was thus able to retake Tripoli and Qayrawán, and also to drive out the Khárijites from Fez.

These continual wars, with their alternate victories and defeats, were a source of constant

[1] Quoted by Fournel in *Les Berbers*, p. 350.

trouble to the central government at Baghdad. The Khalífa, Hárúnu'r-Rashíd, at last was prepared to consider a proposal made by Ibráhím bin Aghlab, which it was thought would ease the situation. He made the following proposal to Hárún: The Khalífa should abandon direct government over Afrikia and the Maghribs; Ibráhím should relinquish the annual subvention of 100,000,000 dinars[1] paid by the Egyptian government for the expenses of the administration, and instead of receiving this sum, should pay a tribute of 40,000,000 dinars. Naturally the Khalífa did not like to give up his personal control of any part of his vast dominions; but the drain of men and money had been constant and seemed likely to continue, so wiser counsels prevailed and he gave his consent to this arrangement. In the year A.D. 801 Ibráhím ibn Aghlab, a soldier of repute in the Afrikian wars, was invested with full authority over these regions, an authority he handed on to his descendants, and Afrikia became an autonomous principality. In this way the dynasty of the Aghlabites was founded.

It will be convenient here to follow the fortunes of this family. The Aghlabites were military rulers. They at once erected numerous forts on the frontiers between Afrikia and Maghrib and organized an efficient system of couriers to convey to head-quarters

[1] A dinar is an imaginary coin worth about one-twelfth of a farthing; so the subvention and the tribute were about £9,000 and £3,600 respectively.

the news of any rising. They also formed a body-guard of many thousand negroes imported from the Súdán; but all this did not bring peace and quietness to that distracted land. Originally of Persian extraction, the Aghlabites cultivated the magnificence and learning of the East. They built beautiful palaces and mosques and introduced into Afrikia the arts and sciences which the Persians had brought into Baghdad. All this did not appeal to the Berbers, who now founded separate States, owning no allegiance to the distant Khalífa at Baghdad or to the Aghlabite ruler near home. The chief of these states were Tahart in the central Maghrib, which became the home of Khárijite fanaticism and intrigue; and Sigilmássa, a city in a fertile valley, which became a great trading centre, through which caravans passed to and fro laden with rich merchandise of many sorts. The city was built in the year A.D. 757 by a small band of Khárijites who were shrewd enough to see its natural advantages. Other smaller states were formed; all of which became hotbeds of dissent and heresy. From them went forth Khárijite missionaries who found ready listeners in the Berber villages, the inhabitants of which accepted their views and joined their ranks. These were the men with whom the Aghlabites had to deal. Years of strife followed, but we must pass on to the closing years.

An Aghlabite chief, Ibráhím ibn Aḥmad, determined to put down the combined force of Khárijites

and Berbers with a firm hand. This is he did with the utmost cruelty, and finally he became one of the most blood-thirsty tyrants that even Afrikia had seen. 'The people of the town of Belezma had revolted against him. Ibráhím marched against them in person, but having failed to reduce the place he feigned to make peace with the rebels, and invited the leading citizens to Requada to agree upon the conditions. They came with their friends and followers to the number of a thousand men. Ibráhím received them with magnificent hospitality, lodged them in a huge building erected specially for that purpose, and gratified them with rich banquets and lavish presents. But in the night he surrounded the building with his soldiers, and caused the whole of his unhappy guests to be massacred. This butchery was perpetrated A.H. 278 (A.D. 891). The murder of these men ultimately proved the ruin of the Aghlabites.'[1]

The Aghlabites would have been quite unable to resist the Berbers, for all Afrikia rose in rebellion, had not dissensions arisen amongst the tribal chiefs. This enabled Ibráhím, with the aid of his Negro soldiers, to win some victories; but his own cruelties proved his ruin. After one battle he had the prisoners paraded before him and slew five hundred with his own hand. In his thirst for blood he became a madman. Even his servants and relatives

[1] Osborn, *Islám under the Arabs*, p. 218.

were not safe when the fury came upon him. 'He had a body-guard of sixty young men, of whom he seemed to be very fond, and who slept every night in the palace. It was told to Ibráhím that during the night these young men occasionally paid visits to each other's apartments. He immediately ordered them into his presence, and questioned them whether or not the accusation was true. One of the young men, a special favourite of Ibráhím, asserted that the charge was false. Ibráhím without uttering a word, struck him with an iron mace which he held, and crushed his skull. He then caused a large brazier to be filled with coals and lighted, and every day he ordered five or six of his unhappy body-guard to be flung into it, until all were consumed. His mother, hoping to charm away the sanguinary devil which had taken possession of her son, brought one day into his presence two beautiful slave-girls, who read the Qur'án, and sang and played with remarkable skill. Ibráhím seemed pleased, and thanked his mother. Scarcely had the mother returned to her apartments when a domestic entered, bearing a covered tray—a present, he said, from her son. The mother raised the veil, and beheld, horror-struck, the heads of the two girls she had just presented to her son.'[1]

At last the Khalífa al-Mu'taḥid bi'lláh in the year A.D. 901 recalled him. Ibráhím, however, thought

[1] Osborn, *Islám under the Arabs*, pp. 200–1.

it wiser to proceed to Sicily, where after suffering great agonies he died of dysentery in the following year. Some historians consider that this may be said to be the end of the Aghlabite dynasty; but in a weakened state it lasted a little longer.

Ibráhím's son who succeeded him was a man of a different character and might have improved the state of affairs, but having suspected his son, Ziyádatu'lláh, of treachery he put him into prison. The young prince then persuaded some eunuchs to murder his father. Ziyádatu'lláh then crucified the eunuchs in order to prevent his share in the murder from becoming known. His uncles and brothers were put out of the way and he himself commenced to lead a life of debauchery. The affairs of the state grew worse and worse, and there was no power left in it to withstand the coming danger from a new set of enemies—the Ismá'ílians, whose advent, as Fournel says, 'led to the ruin of the Aghlabite dynasty and to the rise of the Fáṭímede Khalífate'.[1]

The Ismá'ílians belonged to the Shí'áh sect and are so called because they believed that, after Ismá'íl, the sixth Imám in descent after 'Alí, the succession of the concealed Imáms commenced.[2] The Imáms after Ismá'íl were not visible to their followers, and so their teaching and instruction could only reach the faithful through men initiated

[1] Fournel, vol, i, p. 585.

[2] For further details see *The Cult of 'Alí* (C.L.S.), pp. 8–12.

into the secrets of the sect,[1] and specially appointed for the purpose of propagating its views. Dozy thus describes the teaching of 'Abdu'llah ibn Maymún, the second founder of the sect: 'To link together into one body, the vanquished and the conquerors, to unite in the form of a vast secret society, with many degrees of initiation, free-thinkers—who regarded religion only as a curb for the people—and bigots of all sects; to make tools of believers in order to give power to sceptics; to induce conquerors to overturn the empire they had founded; to build up a party, numerous, compact and disciplined, which in due time would give the throne, if not to himself, at least to one of his descendants, such was Abu 'Abdi'lláh's general aim—an extraordinary conception which he worked out with marvellous tact, incomparable skill and a profound knowledge of the human heart.'[2] These missionaries were called Dá'ís.

One of the most active of these Dá'ís was Abú 'Abdi'lláh, known by the name of the Shí'ah, who in the year A.H. 280 (A.D. 893) came to Barbary. He was one of the most remarkable men of the age, learned in all mystical lore, subtle in the formation of plans, and quick and bold in carrying them out. He was a thorough believer in the Ismá'ílian system, and an active propagandist of it. When he had settled upon his plans, he first went to Mecca and

[1] See *The Druses*, (C.L.S.), pp. 10–18.
[2] *Spanish Islám*, p. 403–4.

ingratiated himself with the pilgrims from Northern Africa, who invited him to visit their country. He did so and found the large and important tribe of Kitáma the most ready to accept his teaching, so to them he declared that he was the messenger of the Mahdi, who would come to them soon, and by whose power many signs and wonders would be wrought. In due time he became their leader in war. The Berbers of the Kitáma tribe were termed the true believers, and on their banners was inscribed the verse of the Qur'án, 'Victory belongeth unto God', and on their official seal were the words, 'The orders of the Lord have been executed with truth and justice'. 'Influenced by the mystic discourses of the missionary, and perhaps by the allurements of pillage, the Kitámians were easily persuaded: and since their tribe who was then the most powerful and numerous of all, and had preserved much of its old independence and warlike spirit, their success was extremely rapid.'[1]

Barbary had never been efficiently governed by the Baghdad Khalífas and was now ready for a revolution. Great confusion then arose amongst the different Berber tribes and the result was that Abú 'Abdi'lláh's power rapidly grew and a large army gathered round him. Town after town was taken, the inhabitants of which were cruelly massacred. This went on until the time was ripe for the advent

[1] Dozy, *Spanish Islám*, p. 406.

of the so-called Mahdi. This was Said, grand master of the sect, who posed as a descendant of 'Alí, and now assumed the name of the Imám 'Ubaidu'lláh,[1] whose father when at the point to death addressed his son thus: 'You will be the Mahdi, you will fly to a distant country where you will undergo severe trials.'[2]

The Dá'í Abú 'Abdi'lláh now sent secret messengers to Syria to summon 'Ubaidu'lláh to Egypt, but this journey was not an easy matter to accomplish. The Khálifa of Baghdad was informed of the movement, and sent throughout his empire descriptions of the fugitive with strict orders that he was to be imprisoned. 'Ubaidu'lláh, disguised as a merchant, after many hairbreadth escapes, at last arrived in Egypt and proceeded westward; but was soon taken prisoner, on suspicion, by the ruler of a place called Sigilmássa, and with his son cast into a dungeon. Abú 'Abdi'lláh was profoundly grieved at this, and at once set forth to interview Ilyás ibn Medrar, the ruler of Sigilmássa. His first envoys were put to death, which led to a state of war in which Abú 'Abdi'lláh came off victorious. 'Ubaidu'lláh was then released amidst great demonstrations of joy, and the victorious Dá'í hailed him as Imám 'Ubaidu'lláh al-Mahdi, Commander of the Faithful, intending, however, to use him and his office for his own purpose. 'The Fáṭimid restoration was to him only

[1] Dozy, *Spanish Islám*, p. 407.

[2] S. Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt*, p. 96.

a means to an end; he had used Ubaidu'lláh's title as an engine of revolution, intending to proceed to the furthest lengths of his philosophy, to a complete social and political anarchy, the destruction of Islám, community of lands and women, and all the delights of unshackled license.'[1]

Thus 'Ubaidu'lláh came into power, and one of his first acts was, in true oriental fashion, to get rid of his powerful friend and subject. Abú 'Abdi'lláh was arrested on a charge of treason and put to death with a number of the Kitáma chiefs. Of this act Fournel says:'[2] 'The man whom the Shí'ah had made sovereign did this, and the pen refuses to trace the recital of such monstrous ingratitude.' The Imám 'Ubaidu'lláh then breathed more freely, and after much conflict, conducted with the utmost cruelty, gradually grew more and more powerful. Between the years A.H. 303–6 (A.D. 915–18) he built the city of Mahdiyyah, and when he saw it completed said: 'I am now at ease, regarding the fate of the Fáṭimides.'[3]

These were the men who completely ruined the House of Aghlab. Ziyádutu'lláh was resting at Requada, a lovely spot three miles distant from Qayrawán, when the news of the defeat of one of his armies was brought to him. He concealed the fact,

[1] S. Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt*, p. 96.

[2] *Les Berbers*, vol. ii, p, 100.

[3] For an account of the influence of 'Ubaidu'lláh's missionaries in Spain, see Dozy, *Spanish Islám*, pp. 408–9.

brought some prisoners forth, paraded them in the streets as captives taken in a victory just won, and then put them all to death. This done, he collected his wives, riches and slaves and started to go to Qayrawán. An attempt was made to rally the troops and to stir up the people; but the terror of the Shí'ah was upon them all, and in A.D. 908 he entered into Qayrawán. Ziyádutu'lláh escaped and after many adventures died in Jerusalem; and of the Aghlabites no more is heard. Though the power of the Aghlabites was broken, there were still the Kharíjites and the Berbers to be dealt with. Only one Berber tribe—the Kitáma—acknowledged the supremacy of the Shí'ah; the rest neither accepted his authority or his creed. Central Maghrib, of which Tahart was the centre, was almost entirely in the hands of the Kharíjites. In Maghribu'l-Aqṣá, the western province, the Idrísids were also hostile. All this opposition was put down with great severity and Afrikia found in its change of masters little relief from its misery and woe.

We must now go back a little in our history and consider the origin of the House of Idrís. The Shí'ahs are renowned for the pertinacity with which they refuse to accept the facts of a situation, a trait in their character which led to a rising in the reign of the Khalífa Hádi, owing to the ill-treatment of a prominent 'Alid by the governor of Mecca. Idrís, a cousin of the leader of the revolt, was connected with the insurrection, and when it was put down

concealed himself for a time. At last he contrived to escape and disguised as the servant of one of his own followers, reached Cairo. The Khalífa had previously sent orders to the Egyptian governor to keep a sharp look-out for Idrís which was done. However, in his disguise as a servant he entered Egypt unmolested and in Cairo had the good fortune to meet an 'Abbásid official,[1] a Shí'ah at heart, who was quite willing to render him further assistance. The greatest precautions were taken, and Idrís, passing through all perils successfully, finally, in the year A. D. 788, reached the home of 'Abdu'l-Majíd, the Berber chief of the Aurabah tribe. There he found in 'Abdu'l-Majíd, who was also a Shí'ah, a generous host and a powerful friend. On the ground that he was a descendant of 'Alí, he announced his claim to the Imámate; and many Berber tribes, utterly dissatisfied with the administration of their 'Abbásid governors, most gladly welcomed Idrís, accepted him as their chief and proclaimed him sovereign of Maghribu'l-Aqṣá. So swiftly and so secretly had all this been done that the 'Abbásid governor, resting placidly at Qayrawán, had no idea of the coming momentous events in the west, which were now being prepared for.

The first act of Idrís was to march at the head of a large Berber force against the pagans in his neighbourhood who had refused to accept Islám. So

[1] When the Khalífa Hárún found out what this officer had done, he ordered him to be put to death. Ibn Khaldún, vol. i. p. 47.

effective were the measures he took that it is said he destroyed all traces of the pagan, the Christian and the Jewish religions.[1]

The Khalífa Hárúnu'r-Rashíd was much disturbed in mind when he heard of all that was taking place in the distant Maghrib. It was a Shí'ah revolt which promised to be far more serious and more successful than any that had taken place nearer home. He turned to his trusted Vizier, Yaḥyá, for advice as to the best course to pursue. Yaḥyá told him not to worry about the matter at all, for he would settle it all satisfactorily. Now there was an Arab, named Sulaiman, known to Yaḥyá as a man of resource and bravey. He had pleasant manners and was an interesting companion, with a good reputation as a scholar and theologian. Yaḥyá sent for him and induced him to undertake the assassination of Idrís. He was supplied with a large sum of money and with a very powerful poison. In due course Sulaiman presented himself before Idrís. The account he gave of himself was that he was a Shí'áh fleeing from persecution. As this was a plausible and quite possible story, Idrís took pity on him and received him into his own household. Sulaiman was an accomplished man of the world, and so he soon adapted himself to his new surroundings. In eloquent speeches he urged the Berbers to support the descendant of 'Alí and so gained the

[1] Fournel, vol. i, p. 398.

confidence of Idrís. All this was only the preparation for the committal of a dastardly crime. One day he presented to Idrís what he said was an exquisite perfume, and then hastily rode away on a horse he had kept ready saddled for his flight. Idrís innocently inhaled the poison and at once fell senseless to the ground and died in a few hours. After a hot pursuit Sulaiman was overtaken, but though severely wounded he escaped from his pursuers.

This murder proved useless, for soon after the death of Idrís, one of his concubines gave birth to a son whom the Berbers at once declared to be the heir to the throne. The breach between Baghdad and the Maghribu'l-Aqṣá was now widened past all hope of repair. The country was lost to the Eastern Khalífate.

In due course, the lad under the title of Idrís II ruled over the country. His reign is not famed in any way except that during the year A.D. 807 the city of Fez was built. This became the capital, and the tomb of Idrís II is now its principal shrine.

The Berbers, a nomadic people, preferred life in the country to residence in a city, so a number of Arabs were brought from Qayrawán as the first citizens of Fez. But more were required, and Idrís tried to attract foreigners to it. It so happened that after a suppressed rising in Cordova, many of the rebels—Spanish in descent, Muslims in religion—were exiled and readily gained permission to reside at Fez. The

two sections were hostile to each other and had to be located in separate quarters, each walled round and each possessing its own mosque and bazaar. For centuries this hostility, sometimes suppressed, sometimes active, went on, making Fez an undesirable residence for peaceful people.

The separation of Morocco into an autonomous state did not bring peace and quietness to it. It would be tedious to describe the constant feuds and wars which ensued. Finally the Idrísids lost their power and the last ruler of the dynasty, al-Ḥasan II, was slain in battle in A.D. 985. From this date to the commencement of the Murábiṭún[1] dynasty (A.H. 1061–1149) there was much confusion. Independent chiefs set up for themselves, and the country was divided and disturbed until the more powerful Murábiṭún came into power.

These new rulers were Berbers who saw in the disordered state of the country an opportunity for rising to power. Yúsuf bin Tashfín, of this dynasty, ruled vigourously. He built the city of Marrakesh in A.D. 1162, soon made himself master of the whole country and thus was entitled to be called Emperor of Morocco. He gained possession of a considerable

[1] This name has been corrupted into Almorávide. It is said that one of their leaders, gathered his followers together and formed them into a Religious Order (Derwishes), known as the Murábiṭíyya. They were attached to a ribúṭ, or monastery. They belonged to the House of Tashín and were originally nomads of the Saḥará. See Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, pp. 429–30.

part of Algiers. Three times he invaded Spain, punishing not only Christians, but the Arab governors who had incurred the displeasure of the Berbers. Yúsuf was an active administrator who, with wise counsellors by his side, kept in touch with all the details of government. He was just the strong ruler the common people needed. His successors were not men of mark, and the dynasty practically came to an end, when in A.D. 1147 Ibráhím I was put to death by his conquerors.

We next come to the dynasty of the Muwaḥḥids[2] (A.D. 1149–1269). The founder of it was a Berber, Muḥammad ibn Túmart, who had travelled widely made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and had seen much of life under various circumstances. He studied in the Nizámiyya College, and some say that he there met the famous theologian al-Ghazálí. He was strict in his attention to the outward duties of religion, and gave to his followers the name of Muwaḥḥid (Unitarian), or upholders of the Unity of God. In the year A.D. 1121 he claimed to be al-Mahdi, won over the Berbers, who were ever ready to assist any opponents of the 'Abbásids, and speedily making himself master of all Morocco, founded towns, built forts and repaired mosques. His successors were able men who, after overthrowing the Almoravide dynasty, turned their attention to

[1] See Meakin, *The Moorish Empire*, pp. 55–60; S. Lane-Poole, *The Moors in Spain*, pp. 179–184.

[2] These are now known as Almohades.

Spain. The Moors in Spain were now split up into factions and so the Almohades easily captured Algeciras in A.D. 1145, Seville and Malaca in 1146, and for some years ruled over Southern Spain. This dynasty, of which the chief ruler was 'Abdu'l-Mú'min, which lasted one hundred and fifteen years, was the greatest Morocco had as yet seen.[1] It came to an end thirteen years after the fall of Baghdad in A.D. 1256, and so the future history of Morocco lies beyond the scope of this book.

We must now consider the rise of the Fáṭimid Khalífate. We have seen (*ante*, pp. 40–3) how the Dá'í Abú 'Abdi'lláh overthrew the Aghlabite dynasty, and then invited 'Ubaidu'lláh to come and join him. The Fáṭimid Khalífate commences with 'Ubaidu'lláh. The removal of his powerful subject, 'Abdu'lláh the Shí'ah (*ante*, p. 43), was no doubt a relief to 'Ubaidu'lláh, but it brought no peace. The Berbers had, it is true, acknowledged his authority, but had not become converts to all the extreme dogmas of his creed; and now the murder of the Shí'ah made a very bad impression on the Berbers who had other grievances also. 'Ubaidu'lláh tried to pacify them but an unfortunate incident occurred which led to trouble. A soldier behaved very rudely to a merchant in Qayrawán. This led to a revolt. Another rising also took place at Tripoli. 'Ubai-

[1] See Meakin, *The Moorish Empire*, chapter v; Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, pp. 431–2.

du'lláh invested the town by sea and land, burnt its shipping, and put many people to death. A third revolt in Sicily showed the difficulty 'Ubaidu'lláh had to contend with in establishing his rule.

In A.D. 909 a deputation of the jurisconsults of Qayrawán waited on him and sued for peace. This he granted for their persons and families, but gave no promise of security for their property. Crowds of people assembled and received him with loud applause. He then took the title of al-Mahdi. 'Ubaidu'lláh was a vigorous ruler, and for his age a fairly just one. He acknowledged the great services the Kitáma Berber tribe had rendered to him by appointing many of them to high offices in the state.

The Mahdí had long desired to establish his power in Egypt. The Berbers were troublesome at home, and this was one way of turning their attention away from local grievances. The expedition started in A.D. 914. It was an utter failure. A second one under al-Kásim was more successful, for Alexandria was taken and pillaged. The Khalífa Muktadir bi'lláh had denuded the province of troops, and it was not until large reinforcements arrived that the invaders were driven out.

The Mahdi then turned his attention to affairs in the Maghribs where the Idrisids refused to acknowledge him as their superior lord. After a long and strenuous life the Mahdi died in A.H. 934, at the age of sixty-three. He was the most powerful ruler that

Afrikia had seen. He had the glory of being the founder of a dynasty which played a great part in other lands. He had the audacity to withstand the Khalífa, the head of the Islámic world; an audacity justified by its results. Islám had now three chief rulers: one at Baghdad, one at Cordova, one at Mahdiyyah in Afrikia. The 'Abbásid Khalífate was drawing near its end. The unity of the empire was broken never to be again restored. It had gone for ever.

Al-Qá'ím bi amri'lláh was the second Fáṭimid Khalífa. The third one was al-Manṣúr bi'lláh but nothing unusual took place until the reign of al-Mu'izz, the fourth Khalífa, when some leading men in Egypt, dissatisfied with the state of affairs, invited him to come there. He responded to the call and sent in advance a large army under the command of Jawhar, who, originally a slave, had been appointed secretary to the late Khalífa. The army was well supplied with munitions of war and treasure. Each soldier received a present in addition to his pay. In order to make Jawhar's command effective over his men, the Khalífa paid him every mark of respect, and even made his own son and the nobles of his court walk on foot before the new general.

The Egyptian Vizier grew alarmed and sued for peace, and for the safety of the lives and property of the Egyptians. Jawhar agreed to these proposals; but meanwhile at Fusṭáṭ many of the Egyptian officers and soldiers objected to such a surrender.

One man stood up in the mosque and said: 'O men of Islám, you have given yourselves to the man who plundered Fez and then reduced the people to slavery.'

He then gave details of the doings of Jawhar in Afrikia and the Maghribs. The malcontents prepared for a stubborn resistance, but their efforts failed and Jawhar, mounted on a handsome charger, dressed in rich robes, with banner flying and the sound of trumpets, entered the city as a conqueror on July 6, A.D. 969. He at once selected a suitable spot for the camp of his soldiers, and laid the foundations of what in due time became the citadel of Cairo (al-Káhira—the victorious city), the walls of which were constructed before the arrival of al-Mu'izz. As a sign of conquest prayers were then said in the mosque at Fusṭáṭ in the name of the Fáṭimid Khalífa instead of that of the 'Abbásid one, and all forms or ceremonies which had any connexion with 'Abbásid rule were entirely set aside.

Mu'izz then thought it desirable to proceed to Egypt in person, but before going he told his soldiers who were left behind to levy contributions on the Berbers, and to fight against them in the country districts, but to deal civilly with the inhabitants of the cities. He further directed his general Bulukkin to send an expedition into Maghrib. He then solemnly invested him with the governorship of Afrikia. He changed the name of Bulukkin to that of Yúsuf and gave him the title of Saifu'd-Daulah (Sword of the

State), and bestowed on him rich costumes fitted for his high office.

On arriving in Egypt (A.D. 973) Mu'izz entered in state the city which Jawhar was building. Henceforth Egypt became the residence of the Fáṭimid Khalífas[1] and thus one chapter of Berber history ended.

The Berbers were now masters of the soil, in the defence of which they had so long and so valiantly fought. It is true that nominally they were the vassals of a dynasty which came originally from the east, but the pure Arab domination had passed away and the Berber dynasties soon threw off the yoke of the Fáṭimid Khalífas. The Almoravides (al-Murábiṭún) and the Almohades (al-Muwaḥḥids) and other smaller families of rulers were of Berber extraction. Thus, the Berbers were now rulers in their own country and, after three centuries of conflict with the Arab invaders, could develop in their own way. Unfortunately they failed to progress in civilization whether social or political. Whatever Islám taught the Berbers, it did not implant in them the instincts of a progressive race, and even until now they remain a backward people. Islám had there a fair

[1] A literary duel then commenced between Fusṭáṭ and Baghdad on the purity of 'Ubaidu'lláh's descent from 'Alí and Fáṭima, on which the claims of the Egyptian dynasty rested. The heated debate was continued long after its political moment had ceased. Renewed in modern times, the question hangs in the balance still unsolved. Muir, *The Caliphate: its Rise, Decline and Fall.* p. 559.

field, and until quite recent times no outside disturbing influence. Looked at from any point of view, it has failed to elevate a strong and vigorous race, which, under other influences, might have now become a strong and prosperous nation. The pure Berbers of Morocco differ now very little from their forefathers of the Maghribu'l-Aqṣá, whom Mu'izz, the fourth Khalífa of the Fáṭimids left in power.

But Mu'izz and his general entered upon a task of great difficulty. There were internal feuds among the 'Abbásids,' but they united together against the heretical Fáṭimids. The Imámians, those who believed in twelve Imáms and not in six only, as the Ismá'ílians did, were also in opposition. The Karmathians, the greatest disturbers of peace at the time, invaded Egypt. Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad, the Karmathian leader, gathered together a large army and captured Damascus. He then marched against Fusṭáṭ. Jawhar dug a deep trench round the city, armed the inhabitants and prepared for the conflict. A furious battle lasted for two days, but at last the Karmathians, after suffering a great loss, had to retire, leaving their camp, provisions and treasure behind. Ḥasan in the following year prepared for a fresh invasion. Mu'izz, who could not safely leave his western provinces before, responded to the call of his lieutenant and came in person to Egypt, for the peril was great. Thus, from many quarters, Mu'izz had opposition to meet. Jawhar, however,

was a man of great energy and by rapid marches and skilful attacks he overcame the enemy and brought order into the land. Then the rule of the 'Abbásids came to an end.

Al-Mu'izz, was the best and the ablest of the Fáṭimid Khalífas.[1] The Shí'ahs, however, wished for some proof of his lineal descent from 'Alí. The Khalífa summoned a council of learned men and nobles and drawing his sword said: 'This is my pedigree.'[2] They were satisfied with the proof and went away.

'Ubaidu'lláh, who had fled for his life from the malice of the 'Abbásids, could hardly have foreseen the time when his descendants, after three generations, would rule absolutely over the most important part of the Muslim world. But so it came to pass and the result was not without its usefulness, for 'by reason of its influence on the destinies of Europe, this conquest of Egypt by the Fáṭimid Khalífas is perhaps, so far as the west is concerned, the most important episode in the history of Islám. The disunited provinces of the Baghdad Khalífate were shortly to be welded together in the vast empire of the Seljukides; when, but for the rising of this hostile power in Egypt, the entire weight of the Muḥammadan world would have descended upon the tottering empire of Byzantium, and indubitably

[1] He even ventured on a war with the 'Abdu'r-Raḥmán III in Spain. See Dozy, *Spanish Islám* pp. 438, 463.

[2] Stanley Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt*, p. 103.

have crushed it. The Fáṭimid Khalífas were the allies of the Crusaders; and to them, hardly less than to the hosts of the Red Cross, Europe owes that interval of precious time which enabled her to consolidate her nationalities and roll back the tide of Muḥammadan invasion, when at last Constantinople—the bulwark of the west—succumbed to 'Uthmán and his Turks.'[1]

Mu'izz was a well-educated man and encouraged learning. He was also a statesman with a definite policy which he steadily followed. He was a careful administrator and made frequent tours through his dominions, looking into the affairs of each town, and cultivating intercourse with the leaders of the people. He built ships, maintained an efficient army, and saw that justice was done in the land. He increased the revenue and behaved generously to the Copts. When he died in A.D. 975, the greatest and wisest ruler Egypt had seen for a long time passed away.

His son, al-'Azíz bi'lláh, succeeded him and ruled successfully. A bold hunter and fearless general he was of a humane and conciliatory disposition, and averse from bloodshed. The tendency of the Fáṭimid creed or policy was toward toleration or indifference to religion and race. The wife of 'Azíz was a Christian, the mother of the mad Ḥákim. Her two brothers were raised to the dignity of Patriarchs.

[1] Osborn, *Islâm under the Arabs*, pp. 246-7.

The Berber soldiers had materially assisted in the conquest of Egypt and so gained power. In order to counteract their influence 'Azíz formed a body-guard of Turks and Persians, which was as doubtful and as dangerous a proceeding in his case as it was in the case of the Khalífa al-Mu'taṣim.[1]

The decadence of the dynasty began with the death of al-'Azíz in A.D. 996. His successor al-Ḥákim bi amri'lláh was the worst of all the Fáṭimid Khalífas. His reign is one long history of cruel actions. He persecuted the Sunnís and all who were suspected of enmity to the descendants of 'Alí. Many of the Christians had been hitherto employed in various departments of the state and had attained to wealth. The anger of the Khalífa was turned on them. For five years they endured a most bitter persecution. Their priests were flogged to death, their churches were destroyed, and the sacred vessels were taken to the palace of the Khalífa, or sold in the streets and bazaars. The Jews were treated in a similar way. At length, weary of this constant slaughter, the Khalífa ordered that those who remained alive should wear black garments. In the public baths the Christians had to wear, suspended from their necks, a cross ten pounds in weight, and the Jews bells. In the streets Jews had to wear a piece of wood carved like a calf's head, to remind them of their apostasy at Sinai. They were forbid-

[1] See *The Umayyad and the 'Abbásid Khalifates* (C.L.S), p. 93.

den to use embroidered saddles and their stirrups had to be of wood. Muslims were not allowed to hold intercourse with them, nor slave dealers to sell them slaves.

Ḥákim sometimes obliged his Muslim subjects to follow the Shí'ah ritual in prayer and sometimes left them at liberty. At other times he abolished the namáz and the khuṭba, or the public prayers and the Friday sermon, in the month of Ramaḍán. He set aside the feast at the end of that month, and for many years he stopped the pilgrimage to Mecca, the ceremonies connected with which he described as foolish and extravagant. He ceased to send the annual present of the kiswah, or the covering for the Ka'ba at Mecca, which had hitherto been sent, and is now despatched annually with much ceremony. He released his subjects from the payment of the legal alms, suspended the law of jihád, and set aside the decrees of the Khalífas, Abú Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmán, whose memory he denounced and cursed, and caused inscriptions to that effect to be written on the walls of the mosques in Cairo.

All this strange conduct on the part of the Khalífa horrified the good Muslims. It is very difficult to undersand how they could have borne with it; but it must be remembered that the Fáṭimid Khalífas, though nominally Muslims, practically denied the chief dogmas of Islám. The orthodox held that the Law given by Muḥammad was final, and that nothing could be added to it.

The Fátimid rulers, on the contrary, held that they themselves were incarnations of the Divine Reason, and that they alone were the interpreters of the inner meaning of the positive precepts of the law.

The record of the reigns of the succeeding Khalífas of this dynasty possesses no special interest. From this time onward until the death of 'Ádíd bi'lláh in A.D. 1171, there was no ruler of any eminence and the great empire which al-Mu'izz and his son had built up gradually fell into decay.

In the earlier days of their rule in Egypt the Fáṭimid Khalífas were men of renown who raised their empire to an eminence hardly reached by any other Khalífate. Their ships of war commanded the Mediterranean sea; Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica were in their possession; their governors ruled with varying success in Afrikia; Syria and Arabia were occupied by their armies. The Khalífa at Baghdad feared these detested and unorthodox rivals. Their merchants amassed great wealth, and their ports were centres of commerce.

In Afrikia the early Fáṭimids had led simple lives; in Cairo the later ones passed their time in luxury and pleasure. An idle life in the harem was preferred to a vigorous one in the tented field or in the council chamber, and all administrative functions gradually fell into the hands of the Viziers who soon usurped sovereign powers. The Khalífa at Cairo became as much a tool in the hands of

his own servants, as the 'Abbásid Khalífas now were in theirs at Baghdad.

Some of the Khalífas of Cairo were men of intellectual power, and encouraged the pursuit of learning. They were generous to scholars, poets and divines.[1] Possessed of great wealth, they and their Viziers encouraged the erection of costly buildings and the production of articles of luxury. They encouraged the teaching of the Shí'ah school of theology and jurisprudence. Indeed Ya'qúb ibn Killis, the Vizier of al-'Azíz, compiled a book containing the law of the Ismá'ílian sect, which became the standard authority in the law courts. 'Persons who read other legal books were persecuted; a person who had in his possession the Muwaṭṭa of Imám Malik was beaten and dragged round the city.'[2] By the constant propagation of Shí'ah doctrines and no other, the Fáṭimid Khalífas sought to strengthen their dynasty. This did not, however, do away with the necessity of a strong and wise ruler at the head of affairs, and such a ruler the Fáṭimids had long failed to produce. The downfall of the dynasty was certain. We must now relate how that came about.

Saladin[3] (Ṣaláhu'd-Dín—Honour of the Faith), born about A.D. 1137-8, came of a good Kurd stock. His father, Ayyúb Najmu'd-Dín, was governor of the

[1] See Stanley Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt*. p. 186.

[2] Zaydan, *'Umayyads and 'Abbásids*, p. 278.

[3] I use throughout the European form of the name.

city of Baalbeck, where Saladin spent his early years. Ayyúb afterwards became governor of Damascus, where Saladin lived from 1154 to 1164 and was there brought up. Little is known about his early life. At that time, he does not seem to have shown any marked ability; but when he was about twenty-five years old Núru'd-Dín, the prince of and ruler at Damascus,[1] sent a strong army to Egypt under the command of Shírkúh, a renowned general, who took his young nephew Saladin with him as a member of his staff. The Crusaders joined forces with the Fáṭimids and so the Syrian army had to retire; but Shírkúh had gained acquaintance with the condition of affairs in Egypt, and was able to report to Núru'd-Dín on its wealth, the weakness of its government and the possibility of its conquest. Núru'd-Dín reluctantly gave way to the advice of his courtiers, and at last agreed to send a second expedition. The Khalífa at Baghdad who desired to see his rival at Cairo dethroned, gave his blessing to the project. In the battle of Bábán fought on April 8, 1167, against a combind force of Crusaders and Egyptians, Shírkúh was successful. Saladin distinguished himself that day and was rewarded by being appointed governor of Alexandria. This was the first independent command. Amalric, king of Jerusalem, and the Fáṭimids then besieged the city

[1] By this time many of the governors of provinces within the Khalífate had attained to a practical independence.

by sea and land. For seventy-five days Saladin kept up the spirits of the people, sorely tried by hunger, fighting and fear. A peace was at last arranged (August 4, 1167) and both the Crusaders under Amalric and the Syrians under Shírkúh agreed to leave the country. 'Before leaving, Saladin was honourably entertained in Amalric's camp for several days, but rather, one suspects, as a hostage than as a guest. The experience, nevertheless, may have been valuable. He must have seen something of knightly order and discipline, and may here have formed a friendship with Humphrey of Toron, who was on terms of brotherliness with at least one Saracen Emir. It is even probable that this was the occasion when Saladin received Christian Knighthood at Humphrey's hands.'[1]

The Crusaders did not loyally keep to their engagement, for they left a President in Cairo, with a guard from their own soldiers, and demanded an increased subsidy from Egypt. Then came a fatal mistake on the part of Amalric. He allowed his better judgement to be overborne by his warlike lords, who longed to possess Egypt for themselves. It was a breach of good faith and ultimately wrought evil. The Crusaders again entered Egypt, not as before as friends and supporters of the Fáṭimids, but as their enemies. The Egyptians forgot all about the incursions of Núru'd-Dín's Syrian army and gladly

[1] Stanley Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, pp 90–1.

looked now for his effectual help. Núru'd-Dín responded to the call, for he was justly angry with the Crusaders for their perfidy. Affairs in other parts prevented his going in person, but he again appointed Shírkúh to the command. Saladin, probably desiring a life of retirement, did not wish to go. He said: 'By Allah, if the sovereignty of Egypt were offered me, I would not go: what I endured at Alexandria I shall never forget.' Then Shírkúh said to Núru'd-Dín, 'Needs must he come with me,' and Núru'd-Dín turned to the young man and repeated the words, 'Needs must that you go with your uncle.' In vain Saladin pleaded his aversion to the campaign and his lack of means; Núru'd-Dín would not listen, but supplied him with horses and arms and bade him make ready. 'So I went,' said Saladin, recounting the scene in later years; 'I went like one driven to my death.'[1] The third expedition set out on December 17, 1168, and soon entered Cairo in triumph.

The Egyptian Vizier, Shawar, was jealous of the brilliant victories Shírkúh had gained, and of the honour paid to him by the Khalífa al-'Ádíd. This became known to the Syrians, who soon lost all trust in Shawar, and determined to take measures for their own protection. They soon found an opportunity. One day Shawar went for a ride. Saladin and another officer joined him and, after proceeding

[1] Stanley Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, p. 94.

a little way, they pulled Shawar from off his horse and conveyed him to a prison. Al-'Ádíd, hearing of the detention of his Vizier, so far from demanding his release, made a request for his head, which was forthwith sent to him. The Khalífa then appointed Shírkúh to the viziership, and gave him great powers. The people, glad to get a strong man in authority, expressed their pleasure at the appointment, for now they saw some prospect of peace.

Saladin, as we have seen, came to Egypt against his will; but being there he found himself obliged to stay, for on the death of his uncle Shírkúh in March, 1169, al-'Ádíd resolved to make Saladin the Vizier of Egypt. The older veterans in the Syrian army resented the appointment of so junior an officer, and some of them retired to Syria; but Saladin by tact, firmness and generosity won over the rest to his side. The position of Saladin was now a very anomalous one. He was an officer in high command in the army of an orthodox Sunní ruler at Damascus, and also the Vizier of an heretical Shí'ah Khalífa at Cairo. He allowed the names of both to be prayed for in the Friday services in the mosques.

Saladin clearly saw that two objects lay before him. First, to conciliate his Sunní master, the king of Syria, and, if that failed, to take measures to protect himself; second, to win the confidence and good will of the Egyptian people, and so gradually prepare the country for a change of rulers. He succeeded in

both purposes. Núru'd-Dín, whatever view he may have privately held about the success of his lieutenant, made no open active efforts to restrain him. The common people soon gave him their affection, for he was always accessible, kind and considerate.

Al-'Ádíd, in appointing so young a man, hoped to find an official ready at all times to follow his will; but he soon found out his mistake. Saladin had a strong will of his own, and had no intention whatever of being a mere tool in the hands of a weak master. This self-reliance, and his determination to work for the good of Egypt and not merely in the interests of the palace, soon roused up the anger of the court party. The chief eunuch headed a hostile faction, but the plot was discovered and the eunuch was beheaded. The black troops, then very numerous, were indignant at the execution of a Súdánese official and rose in rebellion. They were subdued and banished.

The position of the Crusaders was now critical. On the one side was Núru'd-Dín, king of Syria; on the other his able officer, Saladin, now rising into power. They determined to attack the latter. They sent a large force, but aided by Núru'd-Dín, who sent troops to help, Saladin defeated the Crusaders who had to retire. This victory added much to the prestige of the youthful Vizier.

The time had now come when an important change in Egypt was needed. The king of Syria and the

'Abbásid Khalífa at Baghdad urged Saladin to omit the name of al-'Ádíd, the Fáṭimid Khalífa, from the public prayers. Saladin hesitated to take such a strong step, before he had provided enough Sunní teachers to instruct the people on what 'Abbásid Sunnís believed to be the orthodox faith, and to show them the errors of the Fáṭimid Shí'ahs. He was quite ready to take strong measures when the time came, but thought it wiser to first prepare the way. The Sunní theologians did not possess the patience of the Sunní statesman, and with the impulse of irresponsible religious leaders, one of their number, officiating in the mosque, contrary to existing rule and established order, took upon himself the responsibility of omitting the name of the Fáṭimid Khalífa, al-'Ádíd, from the public prayers and instead prayed for the 'Abbásid Khalífa Mustaḍí.

This was the sign of a great constitutional change. No serious outbreak, however, occurred and the preacher's action was justified by the result. Al-'Ádíd was seriously ill and his death was expected daily. Saladin with much consideration withheld from him the news of the omission of his name in the public prayers, indicating his deposition, in order that he might die in peace. So passed away, in ignorance of the downfall of his dynasty, the last of the Fáṭimid Khalífas. The Fáṭimid dynasty, which for a long period had been in great power then came to an end and passed away in gloom and despair. The news was received with great joy by

the Khalífa Mustaḍí in Baghdad, who forthwith appointed Saladin Sulṭán of Egypt with full powers.[1]

Saladin was a man of simple tastes and habits, and kept for himself none of the treasures he found in al-'Ádid's palace. He was fond of building and designed the citadel of Cairo, either as a protection against a local rising, or to follow the example set in the cities of Syria, each of which had a fortress. In order to keep on good terms with Núru'd-Dín, the king of Syria, he sent him large presents, and offered prayers for him in the mosque, thus outwardly, at least, acknowledging his overlordship. Still Saladin was now an independent ruler and meant to so remain. He was, however, very careful to avoid a meeting with Núru'd-Dín, for he did not wish to fall into his hands, lest in a fit of jealousy at his subordinate's successful career, he should follow the example of so many rulers of that age, and put Saladin out of the way. In this respect Saladin showed an intimate knowledge of the nature of the Khalífas and other rulers of the time, and a wise discretion in remaining apart.

Saladin was very anxious to secure a fortress between Syria and Egypt, but when he heard that Núru'd-Dín was about to send troops to assist him in the capture of the fort, Saladin withdrew from the attempt and returned to Cairo, saying that rumours of a conspiracy there necessitated his immediate

[1] Al-Fakhrí, p, 457.

return. Núru'd-Dín then proposed to pay a visit to Egypt; but Saladin made such strong professions of loyalty that the visit was abandoned. Saladin then received orders from Syria to capture a fortress on the shores of the Dead Sea, but no sooner had he started out to do so, than Núru'd-Dín left Damascus with a considerable force to take part in the siege. At once Saladin returned to Cairo, saying that his father was ill and required his presence. Ayyúb died before his son's arrival.

Saladin knew that he could not go on for ever making excuses of this kind in order to avoid a meeting, and he knew that his doing so made Núru'd-Dín hostile to him; so he began to look about for some suitable and safe place to which, if need be, he could retire. At first, he thought of the Súdán, but as Yemen was now acquired, he thought that it would do better and so gave up the idea of providing a refuge in the Súdán. As a matter of fact, Yemen remained in the possession of the Ayyúbites for fifty-five years, but Saladin never required a place of refuge in that region. All this anxiety was set at rest by the death of the King of Syria in A.H. 1174.

Núru'd-Dín was for his time a good man, a just ruler and a wise administrator. Ṣáliḥ Ismá'íl, the son of Núru'd-Dín, was only eleven years of age when his father died. The court at Damascus was full of intrigues and, in order to befriend the lad, Saladin appointed his own brother Tughtigin governor of that city, and proceeded to bring other

cities, now claiming independence, into subjection. Ṣáliḥ, who was under evil influences, became afraid of Saladin, and going one day amongst the people burst into tears and implored their help. A tumult arose and the plans of Saladin were for the time checked. The Syrians then called in the aid of the Grand Master of the fanatical sect of the Assassins. In Egypt they had supported the Fáṭimids, and so the Grand Master was quite willing to facilitate the assassinators of Saladin. His emissaries gained admission into Saladin's camp, but were detected in time and, after an obstinate resistance on their part, were slain.

After affairs had settled down a little, Saladin proclaimed himself king, and no longer allowed the name of the young king of Syria, Ṣáliḥ Ismá'íl, to appear on the coinage or to be heard in the prayers. The connexion with the Syrian government, loose as it was, now came to an end. The name of Saladin was used in the public prayers and coins were minted in his name; both were signs of independent royalty. The Khalífa at Baghdad also acknowledged Saladin as king of Egypt and Syria. Henceforth his life was chiefly spent in wars with the Crusaders.[1] These wars lasted for five years. In July, A.D. 1187, the whole of Palestine was in the possession of the Crusaders; but in September, A.D.

[1] For a full account of these see Stanley Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, chapters x-xxi.

1192, only a small strip of land on the sea-shore remained in their hands.

Saladin though severe at times, was, on the whole, a generous foe. His soldiers gathered from many races were devoted to him. When once peace was made, he restrained any ambition for further conquests and dismissed his men to seek a well-earned rest, but the end was near. He caught a chill when out riding and this brought on a severe attack of fever. After an illness of a fortnight, he died on March 4, 1193, at the age of fifty-five.

Stanley Lane-Poole (*Saladin*, p. 368) sums up his character thus: 'Gentleness was the dominant note of his character. We search the contemporary descriptions in vain for the common attributes of kings. Majesty? It is not mentioned, for the respect he inspired sprang from love, which "casteth out fear". State? Far from adopting an imposing mien and punctilious forms, no sovereign was ever more genial and easy of approach. He loved to surround himself with clever talkers, and was himself "delightful to talk to". He knew all the traditions of the Arabs, the "Days" of their ancient heroes, the pedigrees of their famous mares. His sympathy and unaffected interest set every one at his ease, and instead of repressing freedom of conversation, he let the talk flow at such a pace that sometimes a man could not hear his own voice. Old-fashioned courtiers regretted the strict propriety of Núru'd-Dín's levees, when each man sat silent, "as if a bird were perched

on his head", till he was bidden to speak. At Saladin's court all was eager conversation—a most unkingly buzz. Yet there were limits which no one dared to transgress in the Sulṭán's presence. He suffered no unseemly talk, nor was any flippant irreverence or disrespect of persons permitted. He never used or allowed scurrilous language. He kept his own tongue, even in great provocation, under rigid control, and his pen was no less disciplined; he was never known to write a bitter word to a Muslim.

'The character of the great Sulṭán, however, appeals more strongly to Europeans than to Muslims, who admire his chivalry less than his warlike triumphs. To us it is the generosity of the character, rather than the success of the career, that makes Saladin a true as well as a romantic hero.'[1]

Saladin had latterly spent much of his time in Syria, leaving the affairs of Egypt in the hands of his brother 'Ádil and the Vizier al-Fáḍil. Disputes arose amongst the sons of Saladin, and so 'Ádil assumed the sovereignty of Egypt. He had acted loyally towards his distinguished brother for twenty-five years, and now spent another twenty-three in consolidating the empire. In the year A.D. 1218 he died of grief, on hearing the news of the capture of Damietta by the Crusaders, with whom wars were now constant.

[1] Stanley Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, p. 401.

Al-Kámil, the son of 'Ádil, succeeded his father. He was an able and brave soldier and a wise diplomatist. After a long siege he recovered Damietta and made peace with the Crusaders. He died in A.D. 1238. He was an excellent ruler and greatly developed the resources of the country. He was a man of learning and enjoyed the society of scholars. His son al-'Ádil II was a dissolute useless man who, after a short reign of two years, was deposed by his own officers. His brother aṣ-Ṣáliḥ Ayyúb then ascended the throne in A.D. 1240. He was a strong man who kept all the power he had inherited. He died in A.D. 1249 at a critical time in the history of the kingdom.

His eldest son Turánsháh was absent on duty in a distant province at the time of his father's death. There was imminent danger of a contest between rival Emirs for the throne. The situation was saved by the bravery and wisdom of a woman. In the harem of the late Ṣáliḥ Ayyúb, there was a Turkish or, according to some accounts, an Armenian slave named Sheqeru'd-Durr (Pearl-Spray) who concealed the news of the Sulṭán's death, summoned some trusty counсillors, sent for Turánsháh and managed the administration in such a way that she was able to hand it over to Turánsháh, on his arrival, in excellent order. This Sulṭán reigned only a few months, during which time he made himself generally hated. The result was that he was murdered by some of his Mamlúk generals, amongst

whom was Baibars, the founder of the Mamlúk dynasty (A.D. 1260). The Ayyúb dynasty then came to an end. In a few years more Húlágú captured Baghdad, when the 'Abbásid Khalífate ceased.

Most of the Ayyúb Sulṭáns were great and good rulers. Saladin, Adil, Kámil and Ṣáliḥ: all did much for their people and encouraged learning. They were a great contrast to the effete and useless Khalífas at Baghdad. 'As a whole the period of Ayyúb rule in Egypt, in point of imperial power, internal prosperity, and resolute defence against invasion, stands pre-eminent in the history of the country.'[1]

In one respect they followed the evil example of the Khalífas of Baghdad, and it proved in this case as in that a cause of ruin. The 'Abbásid Khalífas at Baghdad most unwisely introduced the system of employing foreign mercenary troops as their body-guards and as contingents. This was done in order to counterbalance the influence of their Arab soldiers; but these Turkomans soon became masters of the Khalífas and so gradually acquired supreme power.

The Fáṭimid Khalífas and the Egyptian Sulṭáns followed this evil example. Saladin and his successors were not Egyptians, they were of a foreign race, whose rule was always in danger of being resented by the native populations and the descendants

[1] Stanley Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt*, p. 241.

of the deposed dynasty. They then were also glad to have the aid of large bodies of mercenary troops. Far away in Central Asia, where the arms of Islám were now spreading, captured people were willing to sell their children as slaves to be sent to Egypt, where, they were assured, prosperity and good fortune awaited them. These imported slaves were bought in large numbers by the Sulṭáns and the nobles. They belonged to strong warlike races and, when some of them were made free, they were appointed commanders in the army. Others, freed or still slaves, became favourites in the palace and knew well how to adapt themselves to the wishes of their masters, and to gain influence over them. As time went on, the sense of growing power made them overbearing to the people, selfwilled in the service of their masters, and independent of the Sulṭán's control.

The Ayyúb Sulṭáns employed these Turkish or Mongol slaves in large numbers and, knowing their turbulent character, kept them out of Cairo by making them live on an island in the Nile, from which they acquired the name of Baḥrites (or river-people).

This was the title of the first Mamlúk dynasty (A.D. 1260 to 1382). It was men of this body who murdered Turánsháh. The Circassian slaves lived in the great citadel at Cairo and were called Burjites (people of the tower). This was the name of the second Mamlúk dynasty (A.D. 1382 to 1517). Such

then were the men who now became rulers (A.D. 1260) of Egypt into which they or their fathers had entered as slaves.

This book is only intended to describe the affairs in Egypt and Northern Africa during the reigns of the Umayyad and 'Abbásid Khalífas, and so now comes to an end with the fall of the 'Abbásid dynasty and the sack of Baghdad in 1258. The history of the Mamlúk rule does not lie within its scope.

We may, however, refer to one event of interest. The first Mamlúk Sulṭán was Baibars, surnamed Bandúkdárí, a slave who had gained distinction as a soldier and had taken a leading part in the conspiracy against Turánsháh. When he had firmly established his power he conceived the idea that it would add to his prestige to have a resident Khalífa in Cairo. He knew full well that his Shí'ah subjects would endeavour by intrigues to restore the Fáṭimid rule, and that the now discredited followers of the 'Abbásids would bear him ill-will. He heard that an 'Abbásid of the Khalífa's family had escaped the massacre at Baghdad. He found out where he was in hiding, brought him to Cairo, took the oath of allegiance to him and outwardly paid him every mark of honour and respect. 'Some weeks passed, and the royal party, having witnessed a festive combat on the Nile, assembled in a garden outside Cairo where the Khalífa invested Baibars with a robe of honour and the glittering badge of imperial state. He then

presented him with a pompous patent, in which was enforced at great length the duty of warring for the Faith and other obligations which now devolved upon him. Then, with sound of trumpet and shouts of joy from the crowds around, the procession wended its way through the carpeted streets, back to the citadel—the Sulṭán in front, next the Khalífa and Vizier on horseback, while the rest followed on foot; a scene, we are told, impossible to describe. The Sulṭán then set out with a powerful army, intending to establish the Khalífa in possession of Baghdad, as of old. At Damascus, however, he was warned that a powerful Khalíphate set up there might endanger Egypt's independence. Jealous, therefore, of his protége he left him there to march across the desert with a Bedouin and Turkish force; but on his march the new Khalífa was attacked by the Mongol Governor and, deserted by his followers, perished upon the road.' [1]

Another 'Abbásid was then found and made Khalífa, but his authority was much restricted. 'A mere creature of the court, he was kept under restraint—a détenue in the citadel. Throughout the Mamlúk dynasty, though the position varied under different Sulṭáns, the office remained but a shadow and a name. The Khalífa was brought out on important State occasions to complete the surroundings of the Courts, and at every fresh

[1] Muir, *The Mamlúk Dynasty of Egypt*, pp. 15–16.

succession to the Sulṭánate, as head of the Moslem faith, to grant its recognition of the title; and that was all.'[1]

This went on until the Turkish Sulṭán took away to Constantinople the Khalífa al-Mutawakkil bi'lláh in A.D. 1517, when the Sulṭáns of Turkey assumed the title, and claimed to possess whatever authority it carried with it.[2]

For centuries the title of Khalífa had been little more than a name with which to grace a court, the secular ruler of which alone possessed real power. The Turks have now and again tried to revive its influence, but in Northern Africa, at least, it no longer possesses the authority it did during the period which we have passed in review.

[1] Muir, *The Mamlúk Dynasty of Egypt*, pp. 16-17.
[2] See *Outlines of Islám* (C.L.S.), pp. 67-9.

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